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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 001326

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/ERA AND EUR/AGS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2015

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SUBJECT: APRIL 25 GAERC DEMARCHE: AUSTRIAN RESPONSE

REF: STATE 72185

Classified By: ECONOMIC-POLITICAL COUNSELOR GREGORY E. PHILLIPS
REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) Economic-Political Counselor and Pol Unit Chief delivered reftel demarche on April 20 to Austrian MFA EU Common Foreign and Security Policy Coordinator Andreas Riecken. Riecken told us that MFA was in the process or working out its positions on the draft Council conclusions. He noted that the PSC had already reached consensus on some of the topics contained in our points on April 19.

2. (C) LEBANON: Riecken said that it was Austria's assessment that Prime Minister-designate Mikati, in the midst of laboring to form a government, was also striving to ensure that elections take place by the end of May. Riecken hoped that a new Lebanese government could "take the necessary steps in the next two weeks."

3. (C) GAZA DISENGAGEMENT: Riecken observed that the "Gymnich" Foreign Ministers meeting had revealed some differences in nuance among EU members on disengagement, but that essentially the EU had the same assessment of the situation as the U.S. Reform of the Palestinian Authority was also essential in order to regain momentum in the Peace Process.

4. (C) TSUNAMI: Riecken told us the Ministers also planned to discuss a Commission paper on the status of relief efforts.

5. (C) SERBIA/MONTENEGRO: Riecken noted that Serbian cooperation with ICTY was improving, and helped provide the basis for the positive decision on feasibility for an Association and Stabilization Agreement. He said that the GAERC would take up discussion of a Commission paper on "The European Future of Kosovo" if the Commission approved it at a meeting on April 20.

6. (C) CROATIA: Riecken told us that the agenda did not foresee a discussion of Croatia, and he thought it unlikely that Austria would raise it under "other business." On the other hand, he confirmed that MFA had been conducting discussions with UK diplomats about the mode of operation of the five-member Task Force on Croatian compliance with ICTY. The Task Force would discuss on the margins of the GAERC how to proceed. Talks with Croatia following the April 26 Association Council meeting would focus on what the Croatians had done and planned to do to reach full compliance with ICTY. In Austria's view, the EU would need to "make more concrete" what Croatia is supposed to do to ensure compliance, especially if it turned out Gotovina were not physically present in Croatia. Riecken said that Croatia should demonstrate that it had taken down the informal networks that support Gotovina.

7. (C) RUSSIA: The GAERC would also prepare for the May 10 EU-Russia summit in Moscow which should conclude the "four spaces" proposal as a package. As usual, Riecken commented, "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed."

Brown